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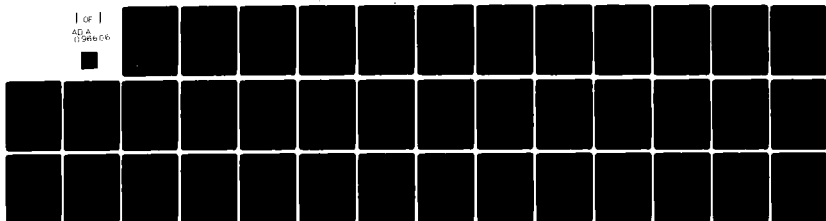
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SOVIET PERCEPTIONS OF  
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**STRATEGIC STUDIES INSTITUTE  
US ARMY WAR COLLEGE  
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania**

**SOVIET PERCEPTIONS OF THE AMERICAN  
POLITICAL MILIEU**

**by**

**Daniel S. Papp**

**1 August 1980**

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Composition of this memorandum was accomplished by Mrs. Janet C. Smith.

#### **NOTE**


Research for this memorandum was completed in 1979.

## FOREWORD

The author of this memorandum contends that Soviet policy toward the United States is influenced by Soviet perceptions of the American political system. This memorandum seeks to analyze these perceptions, recognizing that such an attempt may yield only a highly subjective assessment of what the "real" Soviet perception is. The author finds that Soviet analysis of the American political milieu has become exceedingly sophisticated within the confines of Marxist rhetoric and provides a startlingly accurate representation of American politics. He concludes that this new realism has undoubtedly given Soviet policymakers an enhanced level of understanding of the forces and factors which determine US policy.

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This memorandum was prepared as a contribution to the field of national security research and study. As such, it does not reflect the official view of the College, the Department of the Army, or the Department of Defense.



JACK N. MERRITT  
Major General, USA  
Commandant

#### **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR**

DR. DANIEL S. PAPP is Director of the School of Social Sciences at Georgia Institute of Technology. From 1977 to 1978, he served as a research professor with the Strategic Studies Institute. A graduate of Dartmouth College, he received his doctorate in international affairs at the University of Miami's Center for Advanced International Studies. He has published articles in *International Journal*, *Social Science Quarterly*, *Soviet Union*, *Resources Policy*, *Parameters*, *US Naval War College Review*, *Air University Review*, and *Current History*. He is the author of *Vietnam: The View From Moscow, Peking and Washington* (1980).

### **SOVIET PERCEPTIONS OF THE AMERICAN POLITICAL MILIEU**

During the past decade, students of international affairs have increasingly examined the role which perceptions play in foreign policy decisionmaking. These examinations have included theoretical discussion and case study analysis. Perhaps the leading reason for this growth of interest in the role of perceptions in foreign policy decisionmaking is the expanded awareness that the image of itself which a state projects is often a "major factor in determining other states' policies toward it." Thus, a decisionmaker's perception of another state may play a fundamental role in determining the policy option which that decisionmaker will favor for his state in issue areas which may impact the interests of that other state.

This observation has particular relevance to Soviet-American relations. Leaders of both nations have observed that neither country may act in the international arena without taking into account the potential reaction of the other. Given the legitimacy of this observation, it then follows that each superpower must be vitally concerned with assessing and evaluating the political decisionmaking process of the other. If this is in fact true, then it may be argued that before one can comprehend the foreign policies

of each superpower, one must first (among other things) comprehend their perceptions of each other's political system.

A brief examination of American policy toward the Soviet Union since World War II tends to support this point of view. For example, in the famous "X-Article," George Kennan argued that the United States, by skillfully designing its foreign policy to prevent Soviet expansion, could influence the Soviet political system to become more status quo oriented and increasingly willing to cooperate with the West. To a great extent, the ensuing US policy of containment was rationalized on the basis that it would eventually lead to a "mellowing" of the Soviet political system. More recently, Henry Kissinger's economic linkage strategy was at least in part designed to draw the Soviet Union into the international economic community to such a degree that the USSR would hesitate to undertake internal or external policies which might alienate its trading partners. During the past few years, Jimmy Carter's expressions of concern over human rights violations perpetuated by the Soviet political systems have regularly chilled Soviet-American relations. In all of these examples, it is evident that certain American perceptions of the Soviet political system have impacted US policy toward the USSR.

It is reasonable to assume that Soviet policy toward the United States is similarly influenced by Soviet perceptions of the American political system. Western scholars, however, have rarely undertaken analysis of these Soviet perceptions.<sup>1</sup> This study seeks to add to that limited discussion.

#### PROBLEMS OF PERCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

Given the relatively controlled and secretive nature of the Soviet decisionmaking process, how may one deduce "Soviet perceptions"? This is a difficult issue, fraught with methodological problems. Traditionally, Soviet perceptions (as well as Soviet motivations and intentions) have been deduced from analysis of Soviet policy, the Soviet media, and statements from Soviet leaders. This method of analysis has been by its very nature highly subjective, influenced, as Alexander Dallin has observed, by "the shifting winds of public mood" and "a hard core of persistent ideological preconceptions."<sup>2</sup> Even analysts who attempt to be objective often fall prey to fallacies of observation.<sup>3</sup>

The value of perceptual analysis is, of course, limited by this subjectivity. Nonetheless, given the fact that access to the Soviet decisionmaking process is not available, this traditional method of impugning Soviet perceptions must be used if an enhanced understanding of Soviet policy is desired. However, it is also necessary to be cognizant of the specific difficulties which any perceptual analysis encounters. These difficulties include, but are not limited to:

- Differentiating between "real" perceptions and "ideologically-influenced" or "nationalism-influenced" perceptions. "Marxism-Leninism" and "Soviet nationalism," it may be argued, color the USSR's outlook on most issues. As the analyst of Soviet affairs attempts to gauge Soviet perceptions, he must attempt to answer how much these factors influence "real" Soviet perceptions as opposed to "propaganda-oriented" Soviet perceptions. While the concepts of "esoteric communications" discussed by Myron Rush, Donald Zagonia, and others enables researchers to differentiate between certain "real" and "propaganda" positions in Soviet literature and statements,<sup>6</sup> it must be realized that considerable subjectivity inevitably remains.

- Separating "real" perceptions from "bureaucratized" perceptions. Bureaucratic influences within the Soviet political process are considerable, as Nikita Khrushchev pointed out.<sup>7</sup> It may thus be expected that Soviet policies, documents, and statements do not accurately reflect the "real" perceptions of individual Soviet leaders, but rather their perceptions as influenced by bureaucratic-political (as well as ideological and national) pressures. It is not surprising, for example, that Soviet military writers view a nuclear war as "winnable" more regularly than do Soviet nonmilitary writers.<sup>8</sup> Whether this reflects a genuine perceptual difference, or a bureaucratically-induced perceptual difference, requires a subjective judgement.

- Determining those perceptions have most impact on policy decisions. With the Soviet decisionmaking process being essentially secretive, it is impossible to ascertain with any certainty which Soviet leaders are most influential on an issue-by-issue basis. While it may be assumed that Secretary General Brezhnev's perceptions and viewpoints are influential on almost all issues, one cannot clearly and definitely assess the role which the perceptions and viewpoints of other members of the Soviet elite have on policy. The

analyst is therefore unsure of how much impact to attach to their perceptions. Perhaps the best example of the uncertainties evoked by this secrecy is the debate over the role which Georgi Arbatov, the Director of the Soviet Institute of the USA and Canada, occupies in the Soviet decisionmaking process. One school of thought views him as an influential member of Brezhnev's inner-circle of advisors; if true, Arbatov's perceptions of the United States and the US political system are critically significant. However, a second school of thought sees Arbatov as merely a Soviet mouthpiece to disseminate the Kremlin's preferred interpretation of contemporary issues; if true, Arbatov's perceptions may be dismissed as of limited policy-influencing importance. Once again, with certain exceptions, there is no method to resolve this debate with a great degree of certainty.

- Ascertaining which perceptions of the relevant decisionmakers have the greatest impact on policy. It may be argued with some justification that even if it were possible to identify the relevant Soviet decisionmakers on a particular issue, there is no way to assess whether or not a particular perception influenced their position on a particular policy issue. This, of course, is related directly to the psychology of decisionmaking.<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, this argument further accentuates the undeniably subjective nature of determining the role of perception in the foreign policy decisionmaking process.

It should perhaps be pointed out at this time that none of these problems is peculiar to analysis of the role of perceptions in the Soviet foreign policy decisionmaking process. Rather, these problems are endemic to all analysis of the role of perceptions. They *are*, however, further magnified within the Soviet context.

Therefore, when we analyze Soviet perceptions of the American political milieu, our best efforts may yield only a highly subjective assessment of what the "real" Soviet perception is. Any conclusions reached in this study—or for that matter, in any study of Soviet perceptions, intentions, or motivations—should be adopted with these cautions in mind, for at best, we see through a glass, darkly.

#### THE TRADITIONAL MARXIST-LENINIST VIEW OF THE UNITED STATES

Any discussion of Soviet perceptions of the American political

milieu must begin with an abbreviated overview of the Marxist-Leninist interpretation of the relationship between government and society. All official Soviet attitudes toward the American political system arise from the Marxist-Leninist class view of history and politics. To the Marxist-Leninist, the political structure of a state serves the interests of the dominant socioeconomic class in the state. In the United States, that class is the bourgeois capitalist class. Thus, it follows that the American political system exists to further the interests of the bourgeois capitalist class. The trappings of the American political system—elections, rule of law, political parties, etc.—are consequently interpreted one of two ways, either as subtle subterfuges designed to deceive the nonbourgeois elements of society, or as methods through which the bourgeois class settles its internal disputes. In either case, however, the bottom line is the same—the US political system serves the interests of the bourgeois-capitalist class.

Such a brief overview of the Marxist-Leninist attitude toward the relationship between government and society in general and the relationship between the US Government and American society in particular captures only the broadest framework of Soviet viewpoints on the US political system. Since the creation of the Soviet state in 1917, Soviet perceptions of the US political system have undergone considerable alteration, although they have not abandoned their basic Marxist-Leninist guidelines. Again, as we shall see, Soviet analysis of the American political milieu has become exceedingly sophisticated within the confines of Marxist rhetoric. Much of this sophistication may be directly attributed to the work of the Institute of the USA and Canada, founded in December 1967 expressly to analyze US and Canadian social, economic, and political developments. While legitimate debate exists concerning the level of influence which the Institute has in Soviet decisionmaking circles, there is little disagreement with the observation that its interpretations of American political reality are considerably more sophisticated than earlier Soviet views of the American political milieu.

Lenin himself appears to have had a two-pronged view of the United States. On the one hand, the Soviet oracle regularly reviled the United States as one of the leading capitalist-imperialist powers. In *Imperialism—The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Lenin continually grouped the United States with other imperialist powers of the day.<sup>10</sup> In his "A Letter to American Workers," he was even

more vituperous, condemning the "American billionaires" for "grabbing hundreds of billions of dollars" from "even the richest countries" during World War I. "Every dollar is stained with blood," Lenin argued. Together with the Anglo-French bourgeoisie, he continued, the American bourgeoisie refuses to seek an early peace, but instead "prolonged the imperialist slaughter" as they continued to reap their profits.<sup>11</sup>

Lenin also left little doubt that he believed that the class struggle determined political relationships within the United States. Again in "A Letter to American Workers," Lenin wrote that American workers would rise up in "civil war against the bourgeoisie."<sup>12</sup> In other works, he described the impact of the class struggle on American agricultural production.<sup>13</sup> The entire US political process, to Lenin, reflected the fact that the US Government served the interests of the bourgeoisie. Indeed, Lenin asked, how could true freedom of the press exist in America when the press was "ruled by capital?"<sup>14</sup> The US electoral process was similarly derided as "a struggle for power between the various bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties which distribute and redistribute the spoils of office while the foundations of bourgeois society remain unchanged."<sup>15</sup> Woodrow Wilson in particular drew heavy criticism from the first Soviet leader, who categorized him as "the head of the American billionaires and servant of the capitalist sharks."<sup>16</sup> Thus, it is rather evident that Lenin considered the United States to be no different than other bourgeois-capitalist-imperialist states.

On the other hand, however, Lenin felt a certain degree of respect for the United States. This respect was obviously not the result of any fondness Lenin had for the American political-economic system; rather, it resulted from Lenin's recognition both of the position the United States was attaining in the capitalist world and of the revolutionary tradition which the United States had. Thus, Lenin considered the United States the "foremost country of modern capitalism . . . , unequalled in rapidity of development of capitalism . . . , in the degree of political freedom and the cultural level of the masses of the people." "Indeed," Lenin continued, "this country is in many respects the model and ideal of our bourgeois civilization."<sup>17</sup> In discussions with Armand Hammer, Lenin told the American, "Russia today is like your country was in the pioneering stage. We need the knowledge and spirit that have made America what she is today."<sup>18</sup> Lenin was most explicit in his respect for the American revolutionary tradition

in "A Letter to American Workers." In this work, he proclaimed the American Revolution to be "one of those great, really liberating, really revolutionary wars" of history, and the American Civil War to be of "immense world-historic, progressive, and revolutionary significance."<sup>19</sup> While one may imagine that, given Lenin's abhorrence of the American political-economic system, he gave this respect only grudgingly, he nonetheless gave it, and it was in fact real.

Lenin's "approach-avoidance" reaction toward the United States was closely approximated by Stalin and other Soviet leaders throughout Stalin's years in power. Frederick Barghoorn's *The Soviet Image of the United States* presents a masterful picture of this near schizophrenic Soviet attitude. On the one hand, the United States was regularly vilified as a nation of open class repression, racism, inequality of opportunity, and imperialism; on the other hand, particularly in the areas of economic efficiency and production, it was held up as the model to which the Soviet Union aspired. Stalin himself well-illustrated this in a 1931 interview in which he praised American "businesslike cooperation in industry, technology, literature, and life," but quickly warned that he "never forgot that the United States is a capitalist country."<sup>20</sup> This two-pronged attitude was not limited to the Soviet political leadership, but extended to wide segments of the Soviet people as well, at least if Barghoorn's portrayal is accurate.

During the Khrushchev era, Soviet views of the United States retained many of their contradictory aspects. It should be noted, however, that official attitudes toward the United States, at least as expressed in official statements and the open Soviet media, followed the ebb and flow of Soviet-American diplomatic relations more than ever. When Soviet-American relations warmed, the positive Soviet assessments of the United States received more emphasis. This was particularly true of the periods immediately before the 1955 Geneva Summit and Khrushchev's 1959 trip to the United States. Conversely, when Soviet-American relations cooled, negative aspects of American life and politics were stressed. This manipulation of the image of the United States to correspond to the state of relations which existed between the two countries was not a new phenomenon; it was, however, much more obvious during the Khrushchev years.

A more fundamental alteration of the Soviet assessment of the American political milieu occurred during the late years of

Khrushchev's tenure. Particularly during the Kennedy and Johnson presidencies, Soviet authorities, including Khrushchev, claimed they detected a "sane" and "realistic" segment of the American political leadership which favored "progressive" international policies such as arms control, an end to the Cold War, and improved relations with the Soviet Union. This trend was accompanied by Soviet observations that the United States was moving beyond "monopoly capitalism" to "state monopoly capitalism," a transition in economic systems which permitted those individuals in control of the government to undertake courses of action which, on occasion, were free of the demands of Wall Street and monopoly interests. Thus, it was possible for Soviet spokesmen to maintain that "sane" American politicians realized that peaceful coexistence was a necessity for the survival of both systems; and that these "sane" American politicians could in fact direct US foreign policy toward this new path of relations with the USSR.<sup>21</sup>

It should, of course, be noted that this transition in the official Soviet viewpoint of the American political milieu also served to rationalize the Soviet-American "detente" which extended from just after the Cuban missile crisis (October 1962) to just after the United States began regular bombing attacks on North Vietnam (February 1965). Using the rationale that both Kennedy and Johnson represented the so-called "sane" element of the US bourgeois, Khrushchev maintained that cooperating on certain issues with these US politicians was in fact ideologically sound.

Gradually escalating US involvement in Vietnam during 1964 caused Khrushchev and other Soviet leaders to reduce their claims about the Johnson Administration's realism, but many Soviet observers linked the new US "extremism" in Vietnam directly to the 1964 presidential campaign. According to this view, Johnson was attempting to prove that he was not "soft on communism" in order to undermine Goldwater's rightwing political support.<sup>22</sup> Even with this tendency to abandon "realism," however, Johnson was the preferred candidate in Soviet eyes. One post-election Soviet assessment of the election even grudgingly acknowledged that the American electorate had in fact been given a choice between two different foreign policies, declaring:

For the first time, pre-election foreign policy declarations of Republicans and Democrats differed significantly from each other on a number of points, and

in this way the American electorate received the possibility to make known its attitude on a major international problem—the problem of war and peace.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, when Khrushchev was removed from power in the fall of 1964, Soviet views of the American political milieu had grown increasingly sophisticated, even coming to recognize that the US Government acted apart from narrowly conceived business and monopoly interests, and recognizing that there were in fact legitimate divergent policy opinions held by various American bourgeois politicians. At first blush these positions represent rather limited changes in the Soviet perspective. However, their impact was in fact considerable. They legitimized any and all efforts by the Soviet Government to expand and improve relations with the United States, and at the same time provided a credible explanation for any turn of policy which the United States adopted. By the close of the Khrushchev era, then, the ideological framework had been constructed which permitted the Soviet leadership to explain both its condemnation of the US Government during the US involvement in Vietnam, and its cooperation with that same government during the years of withdrawal from Vietnam and after.

#### THE BREZHNEV ERA: PRE-DETENTE PERCEPTIONS

In the months immediately following Khrushchev's ouster, there was little apparent change in Soviet perceptions of the American political scene. Indeed, as William Zimmerman has noted, early 1965 witnessed a greater degree of departure from traditional Soviet ideological perspectives of the American political milieu than had any earlier year.<sup>24</sup> This state of perceptions was not destined to last, however. American policy toward Vietnam increasingly altered the Soviet image of who was in control of the American political system. Throughout the last half of 1965 and the remainder of the Johnson Administration, Soviet spokesmen maintained that "reactionaries forces" had once again come to the forefront in American politics.

This process was a gradual one. During early 1965, the Soviet press appeared to separate Johnson from the rest of the US Government in his attitude toward the war, but even before mid-year, this effort had all but ended. Some Soviet commentary continued to refer specifically to the "Pentagon's desire to increase

direct military pressure' on North Vietnam<sup>25</sup> or to "Goldwater's continued influence" on US foreign policy,<sup>26</sup> but others observed that Johnson "approved the new line" in US policy<sup>27</sup> or that "the White House has usurped" Congressional power to make war and peace.<sup>28</sup> Increasingly, Soviet sources declared that "the most important foreign policy decisions are made in the White House."<sup>29</sup> At the same time, numerous Soviet sources made it clear that other branches of the US executive branch, including the State Department, the Defense Department, and the CIA, supported Johnson's decisions.<sup>30</sup>

How did the Soviet media explain the apparent reversal of Lyndon Johnson's policies, and of the Soviet perceptions of those policies? The answer was surprisingly simple. Johnson had masqueraded as one of the "sane" American politicians during the 1964 election, thereby succeeding in winning the support of the public, while he actually represented the interests of "big business."<sup>31</sup>

Thus, by the end of 1965, Soviet leaders had readopted much of the traditional perspective on the relationship between the American government and "big business." The government was once again viewed as representing the interests of a rather monolithic bourgeoisie which sought to embroil the United States in a foreign conflict for the sake of profit. During late 1965 and throughout 1966, Soviet commentary about the influence which "realistic" American politicians exerted on US policy all but vanished as Congressional opposition to the war remained ineffective. Nonetheless, there was some Soviet commentary that discontent within Congress and among the rank and file American public was growing as the war continued. For the most part, Soviet observers stressed that such discontent would have a *future* impact on the course of US policy. For the time being, US policy was being determined by "rightwing extremists." According to one Soviet broadcast:

It is evidently this pressure exerted by the extreme rightwing of American reaction that explains the activization of the US aggressive course in the international arena, particularly the US war in Vietnam . . . .

Looking facts straight in the face, it should be said that the dominating tone of US policy is still set by people who are not moderate, let alone reasonable, but those who have rather extreme rightwing views.<sup>32</sup>

At this point, it should be stressed that Soviet observers were cognizant of domestic US sentiments opposing the war, and expected those sentiments to have significant future impact on US foreign policy. According to the same above-quoted Radio Moscow broadcast:

This discontent among influential (Senate) circles in Washington with the present direction taken by US foreign policy is very significant. However, there are factors which are even more serious. I (the speaker) have in mind the movement of broad classes of the US population which is continuing to grow among students—and not necessarily students alone, but also among older people.<sup>14</sup>

A Vladivostok Broadcast was equally explicit:

It has become evident that a substantial change is taking place in the conscience of the American people, who until recently still had been . . . following the lead of official propaganda imbued with chauvinism, anti-Communism, and ideas of American supremacy.<sup>15</sup>

Perhaps the most striking observation was contained in a December 1965 Radio Moscow broadcast which pulled no punches in its assessment of the US antiwar movement:

It is difficult to overestimate the importance (of the anti-war movement). The impression created throughout America by the strength and good organization of the mass anti-war marches has been tremendous. There is every reason to believe that counterescalation for the sake of peace is taking place across the ocean.<sup>16</sup>

Despite the return of many Soviet observers to their traditional perception of the linkage between US Government policy and the interests in monopoly capitalism, it may not be argued, therefore, that the pre-Khrushchevian perspective on the American political milieu had been readopted. Rather, Soviet observers recognized that while policy was being determined by "rightwing elements" of the bourgeoisie, "realistic elements" still existed in Washington particularly in the Senate, even though their influence had been sharply curtailed. Even more startlingly, Soviet observers attached significant importance to the impact which nonbourgeois elements of the American population would have on US policy in the near-term future. This was clearly a major departure from traditional Soviet ideological assessments of the American political milieu. Throughout 1966 and 1967, various Soviet commentators differed

in their assessments of the relative strengths and cohesiveness of these various actors in the American political milieu, but few (if any) intimated that Lyndon Johnson and the rightwing bourgeois interests he allegedly represented could conduct policy with total disregard for the other disparate elements of the American body politic. Thus, while there had been since the immediate post-Khrushchev months a backsliding of Soviet perceptions of the American political scene toward more traditional interpretations, this backsliding was by no means complete. Indeed, it had stopped far short of the old ideological viewpoints, and had left room for future changes in the Soviet perception of the American political system.

It is not surprising, however, that Soviet observers were hesitant to change their perceptions of the US system. Having at one point accepted Lyndon Johnson as a representative of the "sane" elements of the American ruling class, Soviet commentators had been rudely embarrassed as he adopted policies contrary to their definition of "sanity." Having been "deceived" once, they were more than ready for additional instances of Johnson's duplicity. Thus, when the *American President announced he did not intend to run for reelection*, the immediate reaction of most Soviet commentators was to categorize Johnson's announcement as a trick.<sup>37</sup> Few Soviet writers accepted Johnson's statement that he would not run until after the Democratic convention nominated Hubert Humphrey.

The 1968 election itself was held in an "atmosphere of severe crisis in domestic and foreign policy, engendered by the sharp worsening of social and racial contradictions and the aggressive war in Vietnam," as one Soviet newspaper put it.<sup>38</sup> Unlike the 1964 election, when Soviet observers purported to recognize a difference between Johnson's and Goldwater's policy positions, the 1968 election was contested by two individuals who had differences which were, in Soviet eyes, "hard to detect even with a magnifying glass."<sup>39</sup> The appearance of a third major candidate, George Wallace, was derided as "bearing all the earmarks not simply of racism but of undisguised fascism."<sup>40</sup> Clearly, as far as Soviet observers were concerned, the 1968 presidential election directly reflected the control which the "reactionary elements" of the bourgeoisie had over the American government and the American political process. Richard Nixon's victory did little to assuage

Soviet concerns about the perceived dominance of the right in American politics since Nixon himself had had a long history of fervent opposition to communism.

Why had not those segments of the American population which the USSR earlier viewed as having future influence played a more prominent role in the election? There were two primary reasons. First, the rightwing dominance in each political party had obviously prevented a "realistic" candidate such as Eugene McCarthy from obtaining the nomination. Thus, progressive elements in the US electorate had no one to support, and were effectively excluded from participation. Second, the American antiwar movement, composed primarily of students during 1967 and 1968, was not sufficiently conscious of the class nature of the struggle they were engaged in. Indeed, the very heterogeneity of class composition of the American student movement forced it to adopt diverse ideological views, thereby making it easier for the "ruling clique" to neutralize the movement, at least as far as Vikenti Matveev, a prominent political observer for *Izvestia*, was concerned. The diversity of student opposition to a wide variety of government programs was further increased, in Matveev's eyes, by its alliance with various intellectuals, writers, artists, scientists, civil rights organizations, and trade unions.<sup>4</sup> This immense diversity had reduced the political effectiveness of the antiwar movement, had permitted the rightwing politicians to dominate the nominating conventions, and had given the election to Richard Nixon. Nixon's later successful appeals to the so-called "Silent Majority" for support were interpreted as proof positive that the antiwar movement remained amorphous and insufficiently conscious of the class struggle.

Richard Nixon himself presented a problem to Soviet leaders. Long acknowledged as an ardent anti-Communist, the Soviet was not overly pleased that he had received the Republican nomination. As previously noted, most Soviet commentators attributed his nomination to the strength of the Republican rightwing, although some acknowledged that his immense political acumen would succeed in holding the Republican Party together at least for the duration of the campaign. Nixon's efforts to present himself as a "new Nixon" were viewed by most Soviet commentators as "political maneuvers designed to attract votes, particularly the votes of the independents and many Democrats

who are dissatisfied with Johnson's policies."<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, as the Republican candidate continued to stress that it was time to move American policy from confrontation to negotiation, a noticeable softening in Soviet assessments of him took place. Thus, as *Izvestiia* noted a month before the election:

Nixon, not having forgotten Goldwater's failure and taking stock of the situation in the country, has tried to conceal his past reputation as a man of strongly conservative, rightwing convictions . . . in general, (Nixon) is not an extremist . . . .<sup>43</sup>

The Soviet quandary as to which Nixon was the real Nixon was articulately pointed out by a *New Times* article in late November 1968. *New Times* noted that during his campaign Nixon had often advocated the beginning of an era of Soviet-American negotiations, but at the same time had repeatedly emphasized that the United States must negotiate from strength. "Just how Nixon will implement this approach in concrete policy measures remains to be seen," the magazine concluded.<sup>44</sup>

Given this Soviet uncertainty, it was not surprising that the Soviet leadership adopted a wait-and-see attitude toward the new President during his first several months in office. During this period, Nixon sanctioned strategic sufficiency and rejected American strategic superiority, opened a dialogue on international issues with Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin, and continued to stress his desire for Soviet-American negotiations. These and other conciliatory gestures clearly had an impact on Soviet perceptions of Nixon. No less a person than Brezhnev himself commented on "new moderating forces" which had appeared in American ruling circles in his address to the June 1969 Congress of International Communist Parties. According to the Soviet leader:

In the capitalist camp we distinguish a more moderate wing as well. While remaining our class ideological enemy, its representatives assess the contemporary correlation of forces quite soberly and are inclined to explore mutually acceptable settlement of existing international issues.<sup>45</sup>

This did not imply, however, that the Soviet leadership had finally and totally accepted the "new Nixon" as reality. Having been forced to alter their categorization of Nixon's predecessor, Soviet spokesmen were understandably cautious in categorizing Nixon. The Soviet reaction to Nixon's 1970 State of the World

Message clearly reflects this Soviet caution, and even points to a degree of confusion as to whether Nixon was "sane" or "insane," "realistic" or "unrealistic." One Soviet analyst observed that Nixon's message indicated that "America's present leaders have begun to think seriously about the limits and possibilities of their global policy as pursued for almost a quarter of a century."<sup>44</sup> Conversely, another analyst argues that Nixon's speech left "no doubt that military strength continues to be the basis of US policy, while negotiations are viewed in the context of the same old bankrupt policy, negotiations from strength."<sup>45</sup>

While the Soviet leaders remained uncertain about what view to adopt about the American President during the first year of the new administrative tenure, they harbored no doubts as to the sentiments of the American masses. On both foreign and domestic issues, the Soviet media maintained, Americans wanted to reassess old policies and myths. Thus, on foreign policy issues, one Soviet analyst observed:

Never before in the entire history of its existence have the masses of the population of the United States of America gone through such grave doubts, dissatisfaction, and distrust with respect to the foreign policy of the country."

In the Soviet view, these foreign policy problems were directly related to domestic problems. One author observed that the United States could no longer have "both guns and butter," and therefore opposition toward defense spending increased. This opposition, it was argued, was taking on greater class characteristics. The same author maintained that "all the toiling strata are beginning to participate in the movement against the aggressive foreign and reactionary domestic policies of the ruling circles."<sup>46</sup>

Nixon was thus viewed by the Soviets as being caught between two countervailing forces. On the one hand, the "rabid elements" of the military-industrial complex, CIA, and monopoly capitalism, all members of the reactionary wing of the bourgeoisie, pressured Nixon to maintain old foreign and domestic policy directions. On the other hand, the "toiling strata," joined by students and limited numbers of the realistic wing of the bourgeoisie, pressured Nixon to change policies.

The American incursion into Cambodia in April 1970 sent a clear signal to Soviet analysts of American affairs about which side was

winning the perceived struggle to influence the American President. Soviet Premier Kosygin held his first press conference in five years to denounce the Cambodian incursion, Defense Minister Grechko assailed the United States for its "aggressive actions" in a speech *The New York Times* described as "one of the toughest anti-American speeches heard in a long time," and even Brezhnev and Podgorny joined in the condemnation during major addresses in June.<sup>10</sup>

Even though Nixon had temporarily yielded to rightwing elements of the ruling class, Soviet commentary refused to acknowledge that he could ignore continuing public opposition to policy. Indeed, following the Cambodian incursion, the Soviet media increasingly remarked that the "zigzags" of US foreign policy were direct results of conflicting domestic political pressures on Nixon. Nixon's willingness to adopt a reactionary foreign policy pattern was tempered by his cognizance that a hard-line foreign policy would evoke domestic opposition. To the Soviets, the attention that Nixon paid to the influence of foreign policy on the domestic scene made it virtually impossible for other nations to follow his foreign policy "zigzags." Georgi Arbatov even argued that the Nixon Doctrine itself was not intended to solve international problems, but rather sought to attain "the mollification of American public opinion," "lessening of pressure that the aggravated domestic problems exert upon the administration," and "preventing the consequences of those moods that might be detrimental for the party that is in power."<sup>11</sup> As Brezhnev stated in his speech to the 24th CPSU Congress, "Relations with the United States are also complicated by the frequent zigzags in American foreign policy, which are evidently connected with some expedient domestic policy maneuvers."<sup>12</sup> This linkage of foreign policy and domestic political pressures also explained, in Soviet eyes, the methods which Nixon chose to implement his foreign policy. Rapid and extreme actions such as the Cambodian incursion and later the mining of Haiphong proved that Nixon sought to mollify the rightwing; rapid withdrawals were designed to minimize the time that domestic opposition had to organize.

The view that Nixon was attempting to assuage both "realistic" and "unrealistic" critics of his policy dominated Soviet discussions of the American political scene throughout 1970 and 1971. Soviet assessments of which group held the upper hand in American

politics was, of course, determined by the latest "zig" or "zag" of US policy. And it was equally clear that Soviet analysts believed that Nixon himself was the architect of US foreign and domestic policy, even though he felt it necessary to respond to different pressures as he determined policy. By the end of 1971, then, the dominant Soviet perception of the American political milieu was that decisionmaking was centralized in the White House, but that the President himself needed to chart a policy course which assuaged first one extreme, then the other extreme, of the increasingly polarized American body politic, which itself was becoming more class conscious. This dominant perception would soon be fundamentally altered.

#### DETENTE AND THE WATERGATE EVOLUTION

Nixon's May 1972 trip to the Soviet Union and the signing of the first Strategic Arms Limitation Agreement marked the beginning of a major shift in Soviet perceptions of Richard Nixon, the relative strengths of the structures of US Government, and the relative strengths of the various groups in the American body politic. Whereas Nixon had previously played the consummate politician in his efforts to appease the entire political spectrum, following his trip, Soviet commentary clearly cast him as a "realist." Perhaps the most telling indication of this final Soviet acceptance of Nixon as a "realist" was the fact that the Soviet media favored his election in the 1972 presidential campaign.<sup>11</sup> Whereas Nixon previously took into consideration the concerns of "Goldwater Republicans in the Senate," the CIA, and the military-industrial complex in his policy formulation, his journey to the USSR, acceptance of peaceful coexistence, and finalization of SALT indicated to Soviet observers that the White House could now formulate policy without bending to the desires of other segments of government. Finally, whereas the US political spectrum had previously been polarized with the "realists" slowly increasing their strength, Nixon's actions had accelerated the growth in strength of the "realistic" segment of the US body politic.

Why had Nixon abandoned his "zigzag" policies? Soviet commentary on this question was rather explicit. Two factors dictated Nixon's new position. First, "growing domestic dissatisfaction" with "adventurous policies" influenced the

change. Thus, the longstanding Soviet prediction that domestic opposition would prevail was finally justified. Second, and even more importantly the "changing international correlation of forces," most specifically the Soviet attainment of strategic parity, had led Nixon to finally complete his political conversion.

This did not indicate, however, that the opponents of "realistic" policies had been finally defeated. Rather, because of Nixon's conversion, the increased centralization of power in the hands of the presidency, and the growing strength of "realistic" elements of society, the "forces of reaction" had been temporarily eclipsed. To the Soviets, there was still the possibility they could reemerge revitalized. Thus, throughout 1972 and early 1973, Soviet leaders and media appealed to Americans to make detente "irreversible." It is only in light of these Soviet hopes and fears, brought about by the reassessment of the US political milieu, that the Soviet reaction to and understanding of the Watergate Affair can be understood.

Put simply, the Watergate Affair was at the time interpreted by Soviet analysts as the product of a domestic struggle for power pitting opponents of detente against the architect of detente, and Democrats against the Republicans who had further reduced the influence of the Democratically-controlled Congress. Watergate was very much, therefore, a part of the ongoing struggle for political power and control of policy, at least as seen by commentators in the USSR.

Throughout the early stages of the Watergate Affair, the Soviet media dismissed it as a relatively minor matter. Not until the fall of 1973 did the Soviet media begin to discuss the possibility of Nixon's impeachment. In early November, *New Times* reported that the House Judiciary Committee had begun preliminary impeachment proceedings.<sup>4</sup> On November 9, *Pravda* and *Izvestia* informed their readers that Nixon declared he had "no intention of leaving the presidency" even though some Americans "doubt(ed) the honesty of the President of the United States."<sup>5</sup> Privately, Soviet diplomats told Western Europeans that the Kremlin regarded American policies as unpredictable because of Nixon's uncertain future.<sup>6</sup> However, as the storm of controversy over the firing of Special Prosecutor Archibald Cox subsided, Soviet references to Nixon's connection with the scandal also subsided.

As Nixon's troubles mounted once again during 1974, Soviet charges again appeared maintaining that Nixon's difficulties were

the product of Democratic opposition and antidetente forces. One Soviet publication argued that the scandal was only a single manifestation of an "acute domestic political struggle," the result of a feud between a Democratic Congress and a Republican White House.<sup>57</sup> Another publication sarcastically wondered if Nixon's resignation was a "triumph for US democracy" or "Democratic revenge" for the 1972 election.<sup>58</sup> Antidetente forces received their share of criticism as well, as another article specifically asked:

Does not the desire to 'trip up' responsible Americans who have embarked on the path of talks and agreements with the Soviet Union account for the raising up by some US politicians a ballyhoo over the internal squabbles and scandals in the country?<sup>59</sup>

Perhaps the most vitriolic assessment of the antidetente forces which allegedly caused Nixon's downfall appeared two months after Nixon's resignation when it was argued that the Watergate Affair occurred after "powerful monopolies" had "ordered" the various US newspapers to make "incriminating disclosures." Again, it was argued, these "powerful monopolies" were "dissatisfied" with detente.<sup>60</sup> This argument was noteworthy not only for its anger, but also for its direct linkage of monopolies, antidetente sentiment, and anti-Nixon activities.

With Nixon's resignation, Soviet observers of American affairs were again in a quandary. Given the Soviet interpretation of what caused Watergate, it was evident that either antidetente forces had strengthened their position, or the independence of the American presidency had been restricted, or both. Uncertainty once again reigned supreme in Soviet perceptions of the American political milieu. Since Soviet analysts of American politics had long lived with the perceived struggle between "realistic" and "unrealistic" forces, no real new problems of analysis other than reassessing the correlation of forces were presented by this aspect of Nixon's resignation. With the additional Soviet perspective that the US Congress had "in effect forced Nixon to resign,"<sup>61</sup> however, a legitimate new problem of analysis was in fact created. Congress could no longer be viewed as a mere rubber stamp. While Congressional motives (i.e., the "correlation of forces") within Congress were still obscure to Moscow, Congressional influence in the government was not. Soviet analysts realized that the presidency itself had lost a degree of power and influence, and that Congress had acquired new prestige.

Soviet problems of analysis were not limited to assessing the new "correlation of forces" within the American body politic or between the branches of government. They also included assessing the new President, Gerald Ford. Although Ford stressed his commitment to detente many times immediately before and after becoming President, the Soviet leadership must have had doubts about his sincerity. After all, Ford had long been an advocate of a strong American military posture, and had on occasion questioned the wisdom of strategic parity. Consequently, through the first months of the Ford presidency, Soviet praise for and criticism of Ford was relatively muted. The Soviets were analyzing the new situations which existed in the American political milieu.

Throughout the fall of 1974, Soviet commentary noted the unevenness of American policy despite Ford's protestations that he favored detente. The continuing difficulties encountered by the Soviet-American trade bill in Congress and the criticism directed at the November 1974 Vladivostok SALT understanding were eloquent testimony, to Soviet observers, that antidetente forces had been revitalized and that Ford did not have the freedom of political action which Nixon had had immediately before and after the 1972 Moscow summit.<sup>62</sup>

#### THE CURRENT COMPLEXITIES OF AMERICAN POLITICS

To Soviet eyes, the American political milieu has become exceedingly complex since the end of 1974. It is perhaps ironic that Soviet acknowledgement of new complexities has taken place during a period which has had no political crises comparable to Vietnam or Watergate. Whether the new complexities which the Soviets have acknowledged are in fact new or whether Soviet analysts have simply recognized the existence of old complexities previously overlooked is a moot point. What should be stressed is that to Soviet observers since 1974, the American political milieu has defied explanation either in terms of the traditional Marxist-Leninist outlook, and even in terms of the rather sophisticated Khrushchevian and post-Khrushchevian outlook. Current Soviet perceptions of the American political milieu are in some instances so complex (and, indeed, accurate!) that it may even be argued that the concept of class is occasionally overlooked.

The development of this new Soviet perspective on American political affairs has been a gradual process, necessitated by the

Soviet effort to explain Congressional behavior, presidential policy, and popular attitudes. The collapse of the Republic of Vietnam in 1975 provided one of the first instances in which Soviet observers realized that a new era was upon them.

As it became evident that South Vietnam was in a dire predicament, President Ford, by this time an ardent supporter of detente and therefore a "realist," argued long and hard that additional American aid should be extended to South Vietnam. Not surprisingly, he was severely castigated in the Soviet media. Congress, on the other hand, which had only recently added the Jackson Amendment to the Soviet-American trade bill and had made clear its strong opposition to the Vladivostok accords, both of which were "unrealistic" positions, opposed additional aid to Vietnam. Again not surprisingly, this Congressional opposition was lauded in the Soviet media. The only consistent segments of the American body politic, at least in Soviet eyes, were the "broad portions of the American public" who allegedly supported detente and the Vladivostok accords, and opposed the Jackson Amendment and the extension of additional aid to South Vietnam.

While the public's consistency was of course logical under previous Soviet viewpoints, how could Soviet observers rationalize the seeming reversal of roles of both Congress and the President? In the case of Ford, the rationalization was easy. The new President, unsure of his hold on power, was bending to the pressures of first reactionary elements, and then to the pressure of realistic elements, much the way Nixon had during his first three years in office. Since Ford had not been elected, some Soviet articles maintained, he had to be even more cognizant of shifts in pressure than had Nixon. Thus, from this perspective, Ford's "drift to the right" over Vietnam was comprehensible.

The Soviet rationalization of the reversal of roles of Congress was more difficult. While all of Congress still of course sought to protect the bourgeois class interest, there were differing views within Congress of how best to protect it. This accounted for some of the apparent Congressional role reversal. It should be pointed out that this interpretation admitted that Congressmen could move from "realistic" to "unrealistic" positions on an issue by issue basis. Other Congressmen, particularly those in their first term, had not yet secured necessary support from business interests, the military, and other special interest groups, and therefore found it

requisite, at least in the short term until such support could be secured, to follow the public's will. This again accounted for some of the apparent Congressional role reversal. This second interpretation permitted one to argue that nonbourgeois interests were in fact being represented in Congress, at least temporarily.

This stage of perception, if it may be termed that, lasted throughout 1975 and early 1976,<sup>63</sup> and was further solidified by the Senate's defeat of an administration request for appropriations for Angola in mid-December 1975. This Congressional action was praised as a "realistic position" which indicated that Ford, still beset by pressure from the right, had forgotten the lessons of Vietnam. Congress, itself composed of diverse bourgeois elements subject to myriad sources of pressure including some from non-bourgeois elements of society, had not.<sup>64</sup>

The Soviet media argued avidly that the debate surrounding Angola was proof that the conservative wing of the American bourgeoisie was once again marshalling its forces in an effort to reassert its predominance. Although these rightwing forces had been unsuccessful in the Angolan debates, Soviet commentators fully expected them to expand their campaign during the 1976 presidential campaign.

Soviet analysis of the 1976 presidential campaign presented a level of sophistication and complexity previously not existent in Soviet commentary on American politics.<sup>65</sup> The myriad candidates during the early stages of the primaries were individually assessed. Fred Harris, for instance, was approvingly regarded as "leading a coalition of the poor, workers, and farmers," and praised since "he even (spoke) of a class struggle." George Wallace claimed that he "looked out for the little American," according to *Izvestia*, but his supporters were "losing interest" in him. Jimmy Carter was described as an "outsider" who "calls himself the voice of a new age."<sup>66</sup> Only one Democratic candidate, Henry Jackson, was consistently criticized. To Soviet eyes, Jackson was a force to be reckoned with in American politics since his supporters included "the three leviathans, oil, aircraft, and Zionism."<sup>67</sup>

Among the Republican candidates, Ronald Reagan received treatment similar to Jackson, at least in the months before the primaries. Reagan was little more than "a henchman of the extreme right" whose speeches were "astonishing in their primitiveness and incompetence."<sup>68</sup> Ford's policy toward the Soviet Union and detente made the incumbent President the im-

PLICITLY preferred candidate in Soviet eyes, even though Soviet observers were made uncomfortable by his apparent willingness to bend to pressures from the right.

As the primary elections went on, Soviet attitudes toward the individual candidates altered considerably as their fortunes rose and fell. The various permutations which marked Soviet coverage of the rising and falling fortunes of the various candidates also forces Soviet observers to break away from old categorizations of politicians as "realistic," "unrealistic," or those who would bend to pressure. Even though all the candidates of both parties in the final analysis sought to protect their class's interests, the Soviets found it necessary, in the primaries, to delineate "liberal," "centrist," and "conservative" wings in each party. In the Democratic Party, Jackson and Wallace were categorized as "conservative," Carter as a "centrist," and Mo Udall, Birch Bayh, and Sargent Shriver as "liberals." In the Republican Party, Reagan, Ford, and Nelson Rockefeller led each of the respective wings. A leading explanation which Soviet commentators gave for the changing fortunes of the various candidates was the candidates' ability to attract votes from different wings within their own party, and from the corresponding wing of the opposing party.

This must be recognized as a significant step forward in Soviet analysis of American politics. Of equal moment was the new observation that certain candidates such as Henry Jackson were "conservative on foreign policy questions and liberal on domestic policy problems."<sup>69</sup> Politicians who adopted such stances were viewed as seeking to win enough support from across the political spectrum to insure their victory.

Jimmy Carter was viewed as taking yet another tack in his effort to secure the presidency. Rather than adopt conservative stances on some issues and liberal stances on other issues, Carter sought to obfuscate his position on all issues. Carter's victory in the Florida primary, for instance, was attributed to the fact that he had not "clearly defined his program, thereby enabling the voter to interpret it according to his own taste."<sup>70</sup>

At this point, it should be underlined that regardless of the wing with which a candidate was identified, and regardless of the method a candidate chose to acquire votes, his fundamental class loyalty precluded his representing any class interest other than that of the bourgeoisie. Of what importance, then, were the dif-

ferentiations between the wings of the parties as they were identified by Soviet commentators in 1976?

First, of course, were the issues of detente, relations with the Soviet Union, and foreign policy in general. "Liberals," in all cases, supported detente, improved relations, and a less adventurist foreign policy. "Progressive" forces in the bourgeoisie, and the "masses of the voters," supported these politicians. "Conservatives," on the other hand, opposed these positions, but were supported by "big business, monopolies, and military interests." "Centrists," meanwhile, equivocated on their positions, on some issues supporting "realistic" policies, and on other issues supporting "unrealistic" policies.

The second point of differentiation between the three wings was allegedly their view of the role of government. To the Soviets, conservatives in both parties believed that the domestic problems of economic growth, inflation, and unemployment could be solved by less government action, while liberals maintained that they could be solved by more government intervention. The more conservative stance of the Republican Party on most issues was attributed to its "border identification with big business."<sup>1</sup> According to *SSha*:

Conservatives traditionally came forward under the flag of the defense of "individual freedom," "private free enterprise," "states rights," against "big government," for the limitation of the activity of the Federal Government in the economic sphere, for balancing the Federal budgets, and for decreasing Federal expenditures in the area of social programs.<sup>2</sup>

These new complexities of analysis introduced by Soviet commentators in 1976 served admirably to explain the changing fates of all the candidates in the primary elections. The Ford-Reagan rivalry provides an excellent case in point. During the New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Vermont primaries, Ford's victories were attributed to his continued support of detente. The incumbent's fourth consecutive victory, in Florida, proved that Southern Americans also supported detente. Ford's chances for victory in the Republican primary season were therefore "almost guaranteed."<sup>3</sup> After Ford notched his fifth victory in as many tries in Illinois, *New Times* once again attributed it to Ford's detente policy. *New Times* even stated, "Reagan has been beaten in the primaries."<sup>4</sup>

Reagan's victory in North Carolina was a "major surprise," *Pravda* admitted, but attached little significance to it.<sup>5</sup> Reagan's North Carolina win was only the first, being followed by victories

in Texas, Alabama, Georgia, Indiana, and Nebraska. After Reagan's overwhelming victory in Texas—itsself attributed by some Soviet commentators to the Republican's success in attracting conservative Democratic voters—Soviet coverage of both the campaigns and the candidates changed noticeably. Results of the primaries which were previously reported with some Soviet editorial comment were now regularly reported in a straightforward presentation with limited interpretation. Additionally, the Soviet media curtailed its personal criticism of Reagan.

What accounted for Reagan's sudden surge in popularity? Two factors, the Soviets concluded, were most important. First, Ford had blundered by making "concessions to the right." When Ford abandoned the term "detente" before the Florida primary, the Soviets dismissed his action as "impoverishing the American vocabulary, not real life."<sup>76</sup> With Reagan's onslaught, however, this view was discarded. Ford's rejection of "detente" had in fact "cut deeply into his support," the Kremlin's observers concluded.<sup>77</sup> The American electorate resented this, and therefore refused to support Ford.

Second, Jackson's withdrawal following his defeat in Pennsylvania and the continuing futility of Wallace to attract voters had forced conservative "forces of reaction and militarism" to coalesce behind Reagan.<sup>78</sup> Reagan was therefore strengthened even as Ford was weakened. Therefore, the Soviets concluded, with this uncertain balance of strengths and interparty construction of alliances, the outcome of the Republican race would remain undecided until the convention.

How, then, did the Soviets view the entire primary season? According to *Nedelia*, it was the "longest and probably the fiercest fought in all of America's two hundred year history."<sup>79</sup> Aside from that, the Soviets maintained that there were two outstanding features of the primaries, voter apathy and increased rightwing activity. Fully two-thirds of those eligible to vote in the primaries did not, the Soviet media noted, and listed several reasons for this apathy: high unemployment and inflation, vague programs presented by the candidates, and a general nationwide pessimism. Clearly, Soviet commentators observed, their apathy was indicative of the fact that the masses thought the election irrelevant.

The second outstanding feature, rightwing activity, had been significant during the primaries, but would increase during the

election campaign itself, one Soviet journal observed. Therefore, no one should:

... underestimate the impact (of rightwing activity), for it is designed to stir up the feelings of the crowd ... and has a definite impact on the mood of the electorate and on the positions of the more moderate candidates who, fearful of appearing to be 'soft,' begin to some extent to rival their opponents. As a result, the political spectrum of the whole presidential campaign tends to shift to the right.<sup>80</sup>

The election campaign itself was interpreted fundamentally in light of these observations. Thus, Ford's defeat was attributed to his drift to the right, and this dissipation of Carter's sizeable August lead was attributed to his drift to the right. Carter's eventual victory was explained by his reputation as an "honest man"; his position as a "political outsider"; his skill as a politician; his vagueness on policy; and finally, his support from influential business and political circles.

It should be stressed here that the Soviet explanation for the events of and outcome of the 1976 presidential election indicate no fundamental departure from the class view of American politics, but do show a large-scale reevaluation of the complexities which exist within each class, of the strategy and tactics which are involved within the American political process, and of the role which the "American masses" play in (but only rarely between) elections. Perhaps, not surprisingly, this "realism" (to borrow a Soviet phrase) marked Soviet analysis of the Carter Administration itself.

The changing balance of political forces and alliances which so complicated the Soviet analysis of the 1976 election has continued to plague Soviet assessments of the American political milieu since then. As usual, the Soviet media gave the new president a "honeymoon" period as he became acclimatized to his position. In the words of *New Times*, "It will take several months ... for the pressures to subside and for the newly-elected incumbent of the White House to begin seriously shaping administrative policy."<sup>81</sup>

Nonetheless, even in the months immediately after Carter took office, the Kremlin commented extensively on the forces it saw influencing the new administration. "Reactionary circles" still sought to undermine detente,<sup>82</sup> and had the short-range goals of pressuring Carter into adopting a "hard-line" with the Kremlin and of winning Carter's support for increased military spending. Led by the "infamous military-industrial complex," the "reac-

tionaries" sought to accomplish both goals by claiming that the Soviet Union infringed on human rights and presented a military threat to the West. That Carter adopted a human rights campaign and eventually came to support increased military spending is ample proof, to the Soviets, that the "reactionary" elements of US politics are still powerful, and that Carter is a pliable president. Significantly, Soviet commentators have never categorized Carter as a "realistic" or "unrealistic" president, nor as a member of either the "liberal" or "conservative" wings of the Democratic Party, but rather as a member of a third "moderate" or "indecisive" philosophy.

Soviet Politburo member and KGB head Yuri Andropov gave perhaps the clearest elucidation of this perspective of Carter during an August 5, 1978 speech in Petrozavask, on the Karelian Peninsula. Andropov's groupings included the "hawks," who seek to place the world "in the grip of a dangerous East-West confrontation and return it to the trenches of the Cold War"; the "realists," who "proceed from the premise that with the present correlation of forces in the world arena there is no acceptable choice other than detente"; and the third "undecided" group, into which Carter himself apparently fits. This third group, according to Andropov, is:

... aware in general of the catastrophic consequences of a global thermonuclear war. They are even willing to reach limited agreements reducing international tension. But they are fearful of changes which detente brings in international and domestic affairs. Therefore, there is instability and hesitations in policy, an increasing gap between words and deeds, the desire to appease the rightwing, and to make concessions to overtly militaristic and highly reactionary forces."

Andropov, who has emerged as one of the more frequent Politburo commentators on American politics, again referred to the zigzags of Carter's policy course during his February 22, 1979 election speech.<sup>44</sup> Gromyko also deplored Washington's policy shifts, noting that changes occur "as quickly as the weather in the North Atlantic changes."<sup>45</sup> In both cases, the speakers implied the changes were the result of various democratic pressures being applied to Carter.

These pressures emanate not only from the traditional centers of bourgeois power, that is "big business," the military, and other special interest groups; nor only from the slowly increasing centers

of "progressive" influence such as minorities, labor, and students; nor from Congress, which itself is still seen by the Soviets as an effective check on the exercise of presidential power, even though it is viewed as being fragmented by its own special interests. Additionally, in the Carter Administration, the Soviet media has argued that there are two distinct groups of advisors, one headed by National Security Advisor Brezhnevski who favors a "hardline" toward the Soviet Union, and the other headed by Secretary of State Vance, who favors a more conciliatory policy vis-a-vis the USSR. Carter is buffeted by conflicting advice from each of these groups, the Soviets maintain, and therefore his policies follow an even more erratic course than they otherwise would.<sup>16</sup>

It is, of course, public knowledge that there have been significant policy disagreements between senior Carter advisors. This is not a phenomenon brought to Washington by the Carter Administration. What is new is that Soviet analysts for the first time find the disagreements of sufficient intensity, and of sufficient influence on the President, to attach to them a good deal of policy import. This may only be viewed as yet another step toward "reality" in Soviet assessments of the American political milieu.

Soviet commentators have been curiously reticent about the role which "the masses" have in influencing Carter's policies. On occasion, they do observe that Carter must take into account the reaction of the American public as he implements policy, but more often than not, Soviet analysts make no specific reference to the public's role other than to note that it is disenchanted with politics as a whole.

What, if anything, may be concluded about Soviet perceptions of the American political milieu? Perhaps the most evident fact is that over the past thirty years, and particularly since 1974, Soviet analysis of American politics has become exceedingly sophisticated and, within its Marxist-Leninist confines, provides a startlingly accurate representation of American politics. Indeed, in many cases it may be difficult to separate Soviet analysis from contemporary Western analysis.

This new realism has undoubtedly given Soviet policymakers, assuming they are privy to the viewpoints being expressed by their Americanists, an enhanced level of understanding of the forces and factors which determine US policy. This clearly provides a more accurate frame of reference in which Soviet policymakers can make

decisions. Whether this is advantageous or disadvantageous for the United States itself depends on a variety of factors beyond the scope of this paper, including items such as Soviet objectives and American will. Even so, however, it may be helpful for American policymakers—and indeed, Western analysts of Soviet affairs—to realize that it is probable that Soviet policymakers are no longer saddled with simplistic and heavily dogmatic notions of how and why their opposite numbers operate.

## ENDNOTES

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3. For the leading examples of this type of analysis, see Frederick Barghoorn, *The Soviet Image of the United States*, New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1950; Alexander Dallin, "Russia and China View the United States," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, September 1963, pp. 154-62; Stephen P. Gilbert, *Soviet Images of America*, New York: Crane, Russack and Company, 1977; Roger Hamburg, "Soviet Perceptions of Detente and Analysis of the American Political Process," *US Naval War College Review*, May-June 1975, pp. 24-42; and Robert W. Hansen, "Recent Conflicts in Soviet Images of American Foreign Policy: Approaching the 1972 Summit," unpublished paper presented to the International Studies Association Conference, St. Louis, Missouri, March 1977.

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9. See any of a number of entries in de Rivera.

10. V. I. Lenin, "Imperialism—The Highest Stage of Capitalism," *Selected Works of Lenin*, Volume 5, New York: International Publishers, 1960, pp. 9, 43, 69, 88, and 109.

11. V. I. Lenin, *A Letter to American Workers* (originally published in *Pravda*, August 22, 1918), Moscow: Foreign Languages, 1952, pp. 8-9.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

13. V. I. Lenin, "New Data on the Laws of Development of Capitalism in Agriculture: Capitalism and Agriculture in the United States of America," *Selected Works of Lenin*, Volume 12, New York: International Publishers, 1960, pp. 190-282.

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15. The United States electoral process was grouped in this discussion with those of France, Switzerland, England, Germany, Italy, and the Scandinavian countries. See V. I. Lenin, "The State and Revolution," *Selected Works of Lenin*, Volume 7, New York: International Publishers, 1960, p. 31.
16. Lenin, "A Letter to American Workers," p. 19.
17. Lenin, "New Data on . . . Agriculture in the United States of America," p. 190.
18. Louis Fishcher, *The Life of Lenin*, New York: Harper & Row, 1964, p. 558.
19. Lenin, "A Letter to American Workers," pp. 5-6, 18.
20. Barghoorn, p. 27.
21. For a slightly different treatment of this transition, see Zimmerman, pp. 211-215.
22. See, for example, *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, June 28, 1964, and *Pravda*, August 7, 1964.
23. Iu. Shvedkov, "U Novogo Starta," *Mezhdunarodnaia Zhizn'*, Number 1, January 1965, pp. 43-44.
24. Zimmerman, pp. 225-232.
25. *Pravda*, March 4, 1965.
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27. *Ibid.*
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